

**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

A Commander's Guide for Developing the Workforce



**Office of the Directorate
for Human Resources**

Introduction



We have developed this resource for USACE field commanders and other senior Corps leaders who have asked us for guidance on training and developing the workforce. With the advent of regionalization and downsizing, many commanders and senior leaders find themselves without specialists solely dedicated to employee development concerns and training and development issues. While CPAC generalists can and do provide considerable assistance on these topics, there are still fewer people to turn to. This guide provides information and answers, and we hope it will help us all manage within available resources.

As the strategic direction for the Corps continues to unfold, all of us need to better understand the link between customer success and developing our people. We need to explore ways to help our people think more about innovation and learning from customers' best practices, and corporate benchmarks. We need a culture oriented to continual learning. We need your support.

We hope this guide will be helpful to a wide range of Corps members, including commanders, managers, supervisors, project and team leaders and employees at all levels.

This guide will not go into great depth, since our working environment is constantly changing, and since there are many local policies and guidance on this subject. Rather, it is intended to help field commanders and other senior leaders identify questions they should ask, and provides sources of information to answer these questions.

Please let us know if this guide is useful to you, how we might improve it, and what we can do to help you. Our job at headquarters is to help you succeed. Please contact me or my key staff with your training concerns:

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USACE Workforce Development Goals

The corporate strategy for developing our workforce has three goals:

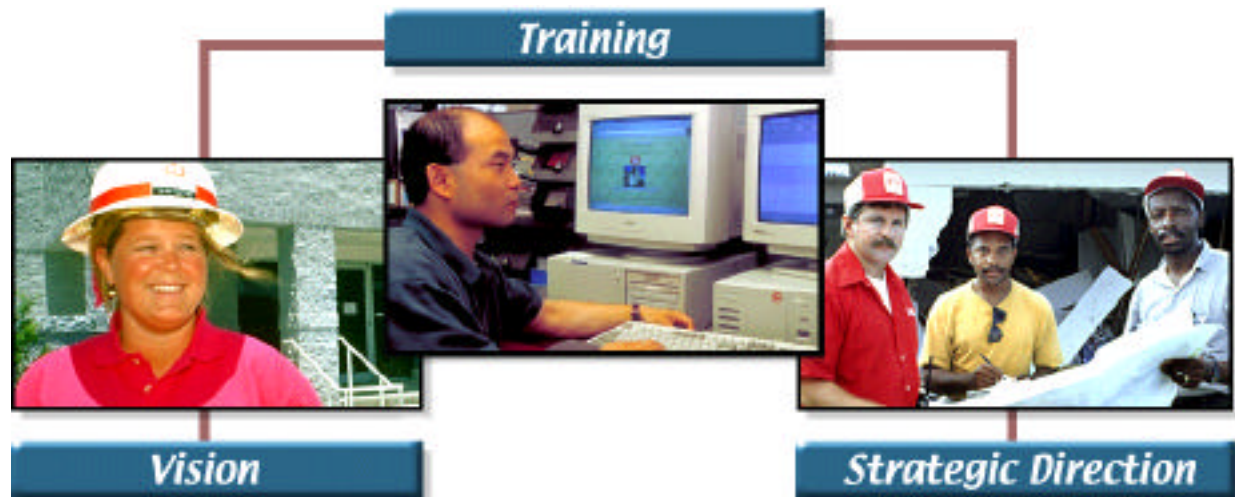
- Develop a workforce that will sustain the USACE strategic direction
- Create a learning organization that encourages innovation, develops leadership and partnerships to serve customers
- Move from traditional training and teaching to continuous learning and education

As the strategic direction for the Corps continues to develop, we are adjusting to ensure we stay aligned. As we continue to look for ways to help our customers succeed, we need to better understand the important link that exists between customer success and the development of our people. If we want our people, particularly at the executive level, to think differently and be more innovative (and have that thinking and innovation cascade down the organization), we must learn more about the strategic development required to make that happen.

Key Principles

To support the workforce development goals, the following principles should be considered.

- The Corps of Engineers invests in its people. This is one of our three Corps PLUS goals. People truly are our most valuable resource, and we need to keep our people trained and facilitate their development so they can accomplish their missions. We do not see this training as a cost, but as an investment in the present and future of our organization. We cannot realize our vision as “the world’s premier engineering organization, trained [emphasis added] and ready to provide support anytime, anyplace” if we do not invest in our people.

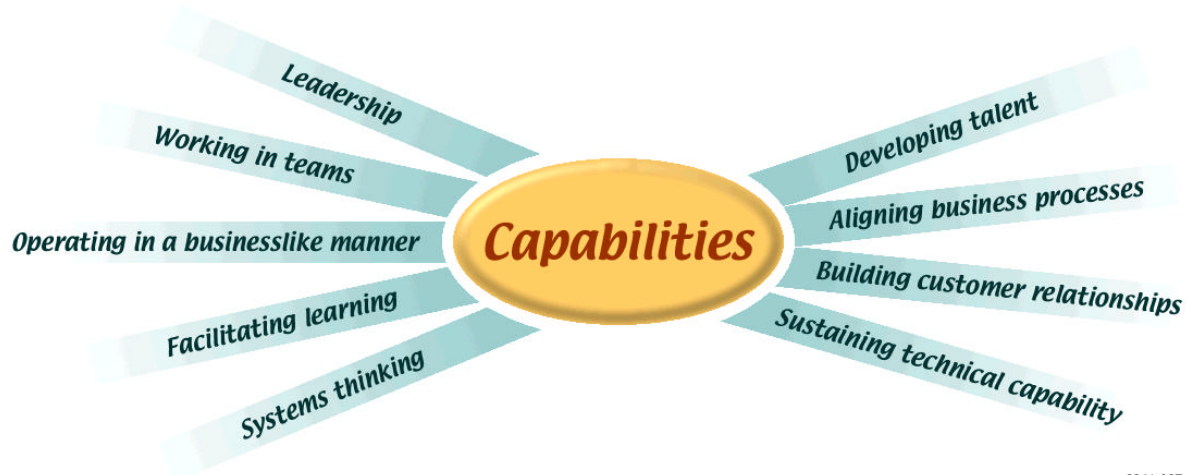


- Our training and development efforts must be clearly linked to our vision and strategic direction. This means that before we spend time, money and effort on training, we determine that this investment will help us achieve our corporate and local goals.
- We must consider what development is necessary to create the kind of culture required by our vision and strategic direction. This means understanding the capability required to create the new culture. We need to understand what skills, knowledge, competencies and behaviors are necessary to build the required capability. We must clearly identify the appropriate learning methods to develop the capability. Finally, and most importantly, we must identify ways to **reinforce** what is learned.
- We need to think of capability in the broadest sense. Capability is a combination of competencies, knowledge, skills and experience.
 - Competencies are natural ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving; how you go about doing things
 - Knowledge is that which you can learn; facts, content, what you know
 - Skills are techniques, procedures; what you know how to do
 - Experience is a record of your accomplishments; what you have done



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Developing capability to create the culture necessary to achieve our vision is our first workforce development priority. USACE has identified nine capabilities required to create the kind of culture required by our visions.



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- We strive to get the “right people to the right training at the right time.” This means that we must identify who needs to be trained (and who doesn’t); select the right training assignments (and consider **alternative learning methods** to formal training courses), ensure that prerequisites are completed; and plan ahead so our people can attend scheduled training.
- Our people must know their supervisor’s expectations before attending training and after returning to the workplace. They need to know, in advance, that they will be expected to use new skills, share and teach their co-workers when they return. This **reinforces** the training received. Most training approved is “priority one” training, which means that it is needed to perform current assignments. We must expect people to put priority-one training to good use.
- Identifying training needs is a joint supervisor-employee responsibility. We don’t believe that training is an entitlement. Supervisors must work with their teams to create realistic, shared developmental plans. These plans need to be firm enough to be meaningful, but flexible enough to promote and not hinder work accomplishment. This is more art than science, and demands a cooperative partnership between supervisors and employees. However, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the training is what is needed by the organization.

Concept and Philosophy

USACE Strategic Human Resources Development and Learning

We must continually develop our people toward our vision and strategic direction. The challenges we face require our leadership, culture and people be aligned with the demands of today's economy. The key elements of this strategic development are learning organization, innovation, empowerment, customer success, and leadership.

- Developing a learning organization is essential because market demands, customer strategies, technology and knowledge are constantly changing in today's global economy. If we are to continue to adapt, our people must be constantly learning. Knowing gets you in the game, learning moves you ahead.
- Innovation is essential because bureaucratic responses are not effective for today's customers. We have many examples of innovation. The critical question is, are the lessons from these innovations used throughout the organization to change the systems and culture? There are four types of innovation: product, process, organization, and relationship. Is our workforce educated about the meaning of each and their importance? Are all four innovation types being practiced throughout our organization?
- Empowerment is essential because people in today's organization need the freedom to be creative and to create teams meeting customers' changing needs. Today's organization needs to be flexible, nimble, and capable of allowing people to work across internal boundaries. Empowerment needs to be correctly understood. It is not "do your own thing." It is not "no accountability" or "no controls." It does not mean always getting your own way. Rather, empowerment means accepting responsibility. It means providing people clear mandates, the right tools, knowledge and authority to do the job. Leaders must create a culture at work where people learn from mistakes. Empowerment requires leaders and an organization that are continually learning.
- Customer success is essential because it goes beyond meeting customer specifications of projects. In today's fast-paced economy it is the organization which can create relationships, and which understands how to partner with customers, that will succeed. To partner with customers we need to understand what the customer is trying to achieve and what success means to them. When our workforce is deeply committed to the customers' success, not simply delivering on customer specifications, we will create lasting partnerships.

Strategic and Systems Thinking



As people move up the hierarchy, thinking in terms of strategy and systems becomes more important to their jobs. It is important for all employees to understand the Corps strategic direction and to think systemically about their work. This broader view is essential for commanders and managers.



A learning organization transforms data into strategic knowledge. We need to develop understanding of missions, strategy, and work processes down through the whole hierarchy. We need to become wiser, based on learning (described in the learning methods below).

Learning should drive initiatives. Initiatives should not arise from isolated individuals who get an idea and market it within the bureaucracy. Initiatives should come from strategic needs and lessons learned while trying to implement strategy. This means learning how to learn, and how to use what is learned. This is a capability needed today.

Corps Learning Methods



As stated above, learning organizations are characterized by how they learn, including:

- Benchmarking and internal best practices
- Experience with customers
- Front line learning

Much of this learning does not take place in classrooms. While classroom teaching remains a part of the overall learning process, it is no longer the heart of organizational learning. The work itself becomes the center of learning. No longer is learning an activity that people are sent to or are given special time away from work to do. Today learning is integrated into the work process.

Creating a capable workforce requires leaders to be educators, and to teach the workforce by the example of their behavior and understanding. This education and resulting dialogue with the workforce needs to be at the heart of being a USACE leader.

Training and Development Tools

Mission Essential Task List (METL) versus Education and Training

MSC Commanders should become familiar with the Training Management Process as described in Field Manual (FM) 25-100 and consider this process as a tool for developing your workforce. This field manual describes the Mission Essential Task List (METL), a useful tool for thinking about training. A METL describes those tasks critical for mission accomplishment and can be used as a baseline for determining the training and developmental needs of the organization. It is the key to the training management cycle. Additionally, commanders should consider future events that may affect organizational capabilities, such as projected turnover of personnel or the fielding of new equipment, technology, or new missions.

METL was primarily designed for identifying the training needs of troops and the accomplishment of specific tasks, focusing on the methods used in the development of skills and knowledge. Developmental efforts need to consider capabilities beyond skills and knowledge. Identifying professional training needs for civilians requires additional perspectives.

Aligning Competencies with Learning



We believe that every person has a set of competencies that characterize him or her over a long period. These competencies are spontaneous and characterize an individual's dominant behavior. Competencies are combinations of values, attitudes, motivation and thinking styles. Experience shows that competencies determine the degree to which people successfully use the knowledge they possess and the skills they acquire. Traditional training methods may not be the best way to develop competencies. Other methods of learning such as learning from best practices, case studies, developmental assignments, project teams, and mentoring help develop capabilities beyond skills and knowledge.

Developing Your Training Plan



After assessing their organizational training needs, commanders should develop their training strategy, a broad concept for training the organization to achieve and sustain expertise. Your training strategy, supported by organizational goals and priorities and forged from the METL, becomes a realistic training plan for the organization. Here are three steps to follow as an organized approach in developing your training plan.

1. Issue training guidance, which includes their training philosophy and the METL itself. Guidance will cover leadership, individual, and mandatory training.
2. Use your assessment of the METL to determine resource priorities for identified training needs.
3. Regularly evaluate training activities and procedures to refine and improve your programs.

Expectations and Reality

Commanders have asked, “What are corporate expectations for me, in terms of training and development, and how can I realistically meet these expectations?” The following may shed some light on this issue:

EXPECTATIONS	Train everyone who needs training.	REALITIES	There's not enough money to go around. Prioritizing needs is crucial. Local training committees can help!
	Keep overhead costs down.	REALITIES	Training is sometimes an early victim of reduced resources. Compensate by seeking no-cost or low-cost alternatives. Much Army sponsored training is free. Correspondence and distance learning (video and Internet) training courses can eliminate travel costs
	Do more training with fewer resources.	REALITIES	Use distance learning, schedule on-site courses, and seek non-training alternatives, such as developmental assignments, OJT, cooperative programs with other agencies and other Corps organizations. Don't neglect formal training, however. Keeping up to date may require training from universities and professional organizations.
	Maximize the return on the training investment.	REALITIES	While there are not many mandatory courses, there are enough to require careful prioritization.
	Ensure that employees meet training course prerequisites.	REALITIES	Holding supervisors accountable for sending the right people to the right training will satisfy this expectation, and help conserve training resources.
	Comply with mandatory training requirements.	REALITIES	Pre-training meeting, post-training assignments and action planning all contribute to a good return on investment.

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Basic Training, Training Basics

Here are some basic tips to get you headed in the right direction.

- Diagnose the “illness” before reaching for the “medicine.” Here are some questions you might use to help diagnose the need for training: What performance problems are you trying to correct? Are you trying to teach new skills and methods? Is a training class the best way to do these things? Are there other methods, e.g., on-the-job training, developmental or rotational assignments, self-study, etc., which could accomplish your goals?

- If you don't care where you're going, it doesn't matter where you end up. Once you or your managers understand the problem, and have it identified as a need that can be satisfied by training, be sure supervisors establish specific learning objectives. This is an excellent way to ensure that you meet your training goals. Learning objectives simply state what students will be able to do, or what they will know at the end of a training course. They also help you measure to what extent people have learned. Goal-oriented training leads to trainees reaching their goals and your goals for them.
- Involvement equals learning. Encourage and approve participatory, hands-on training experiences. No one enjoys a steady diet of lectures, and research in adult education indicates that adults can and do add much to a training class from their experience. Avoid sending people to lectures; instead, look for workshops, simulations and classes using case studies. These methods tap into the accumulated wisdom of your staff and result in relevant, lasting learning.
- Encourage learning transfer by action planning. Even if your staff becomes involved in their classroom experience and achieves their learning objectives, they must apply new knowledge and skills back on the job before you really recover your investment in training. Help ensure this learning transfer by encouraging your supervisors to develop action plans with their employees. These need not be elaborate--we all have more paper work than we need! Action plans should simply identify things the employee will do, or do differently after returning from training. The more specific the plan, the more likely it is to be successful. Action plans build employee commitment and help overcome the natural resistance to change that often prevents implementing new methods and ideas. You can find a sample training action plan in the next section.

Action Planning: Making the Most of Training



All managers want to know “Did I get my money’s worth?” when training their people. Here are a few easy ways to help ensure a return on your investment.

- **Pre-training meetings.** About a week before your supervisors send people to training, encourage them to meet with their people. Supervisors should discuss the purpose of the training course, why trainees were selected to attend, and what they are expected to do with the training when they return. This sounds simple, and it is! However, this is not routinely done. Too often, we send people to training without giving them any idea about why they are going, or what they are expected to do when they return. A pre-training meeting can answer these concerns, and can help build morale and confidence.
- **Post-training assignments.** Another simple way to increase the transfer of learning back to the job is to make post-training assignments. At the pre-training meeting, supervisors might assign trainees to brief their workgroup on what they learned in class. This will improve the trainee's attention during class, increase their credibility with their co-workers and build commitment to practice new skills. Obviously, it also leverages your investment by providing information to others that did not or cannot attend the training.
- **Action planning.** Pre-training meetings and post-training assignments help build confidence and establish expectations; however, they may not guarantee appropriate follow-through. Action planning can help do that. Action plans are simple statements written by staff members that commit to supervisors that action will be taken, based on the staff member's training experience. This written commitment is a very important step to getting results. Plans should also include a timetable (indicating when they will take specific actions) and identify resources necessary. These plans work best when both employee and supervisor agree upon actions. A form your supervisors can use with their staff follows.

Action Plan	
1. I want to use these new skills, techniques on the job:	
2. To use these skills, I'll need to involve these people:	
3. To accomplish my action plan, I'll need these resources (Equipment, information, money, etc.):	
4. These are the actual steps I will take to implement my plan and my timetable for action:	
Step 1:	<u>Date</u>
Step 2:	
Step 3:	
5. We'll know when I've accomplished my plan when we see the following:	
Signed _____ Date _____	

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Myths and Misunderstandings



There are several commonly held myths and misunderstandings that may get in the way of using training to its full benefit.

- Training is free. While there may be no charge to the employee/student, direct training expenses include tuition, travel and per diem. Indirect expenses include salary, overhead and lost productivity during training. Indirect costs are not always considered, and can far exceed direct costs.
- There is a limit on how much training a person can have, and how much we should spend on training organizationally. There is no set limit, per capita, dollar amount or budget percentage for training activities. Commanders must ensure that their people have adequate training to accomplish their missions, and this will vary widely from organization to organization. Some organizations, particularly those facing downsizing or restructuring, may require more training to enable people to do new or different things. New technology and equipment may boost the need for training too. How much you spend or can afford is a judgement call. Some similar industries spend 3-10% (and more) of salaries on training. Again, the amount you spend must be locally determined based on local needs and resources.
- Training “costs.” We feel that training really pays for itself, if
 - It is targeted correctly
 - People understand why they are attending
 - Learners understand their supervisor’s expectations,
 - Learners are involved in their learning
 - Learners are encouraged to use new skills on the job
 - Learners develop and use an action plan for transferring learning back to the job!

That’s a lot of ifs. However, that’s why we need commanders and managers to help us receive a good return on the training investment.

- Training is a reward for good performance. Unfortunately, some supervisors do use training this way. However, training must be a **remedy** for poor performance, or a way to improve good performance. It cannot be a reward. Using training as a perk may give someone a mini-vacation, but you are losing productivity, hurting other's morale, and denying someone who really needs training. Using training as a reward is like turning in a false alarm; it accomplishes nothing positive and jeopardizes others.
- Training is the answer to performance problems. How we all wish this was true! In fact, training is not always the cure for performance problems. Consider employee attitudes and aptitudes before selecting training as a solution. Employees who do not want to perform given tasks will not benefit from learning how to do them. Further, people who lack the ability to perform certain tasks cannot be trained in methods and techniques. To be successful, training must be individually tailored, and used when appropriate.
- As long as training is mission-related, it's legal. Unfortunately, mission-relatedness is only one criterion for making decisions on training. Training must also develop the employee's job competence or support a planned career assignment. Mission-relatedness alone is insufficient reason for approving training.
- The government can pay employees to obtain academic degrees, licenses and professional certification. Recently, to attract and retain people in "shortage" occupations, the regulations have been relaxed somewhat. While Army can pay for some academic degrees, in some situations, generally speaking, regulations and federal law specifically prohibit training for the sole purpose of obtaining academic degrees, licenses or certification. This does not mean that we cannot send people to colleges and universities to obtain needed training. We can, and do! Rather, this means that we cannot send people to college to raise general educational levels or help prepare employees for degrees. Additionally, the government may not pay for degree-related expenses. The individual must pay these expenses.

Questions You Should Ask Your Managers



Getting the most from your training dollars means keeping close tabs on how training resources are spent. You should be asking your managers some questions about the training they approve. Here's a handy checklist.

- Do your people, especially those not at “full performance” grade levels, have Individual Development Plans (IDPs)? Without a plan, little is ever accomplished.
- Are IDPs prepared by the supervisor with input from the employee, and not vice-versa?
- Are these IDPs up to date, and used by employees and managers?
- Are you ensuring that training pre-requisites are met before approving training?
- Do you cancel scheduled training? If so, how often does this happen, and why?
- Do you use low-cost or no-cost training where available?
- What alternative training methods have your people used this past year?
- Have your people received mandatory training?
- How much are we spending on training each year? Is this sufficient? Too much? Why?
- Do our local training programs and efforts support and teach corporate goals?
- Do we duplicate training offered by the CPOC, or by HQUSACE?
- Have we asked for HQUSACE support for local management and executive development programs?
- Are our interns receiving the training they need to graduate?

Training Guidance

There are a number of sources for finding the latest regulations and procedures concerning training. Here are a few you can access via the Internet:

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidance

[OPM regulations](#) provide all Federal agencies guidance on implementing the law, as contained in the U.S. Code. Typically, agencies (e.g. Department of Defense) will supplement OPM regulations with their own, to cover agency specific requirements. Departments (e.g., Department of Army) and Major Commands (e.g., USACE) often supplement the basic OPM regulation as well. However, all training policy starts with OPM. OPM is also a good source for training programs.

The [Department of Defense](#) provides other Federal statutory and regulatory information based on the Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations and other sources of policy, guidance, and information.

Army guidance

Army's guidance on training and all Human Resources Management (HRM) functions can be found on [Civilian Personnel OnLine](#) (CPOL). There is a wealth of information available at this site.

From this site, click on "Training" button for a listing of training programs, catalogs and procedures. Click on the "CPOL Library" button for Army Regulations, Policy and Guidance and more. Also look at PERMISS, the Personnel Management Information Support System. Click on the "PERMISS" button and then on the "Training" button.

USACE guidance

Current, frequently referenced training regulations include Engineer Regulation (ER) 350-1-414 on the PROSPECT training program, and ER 350-1-416 on HQUSACE Sponsored Long Term Training (LTT). These regulations Corps-wide guidance is available on the [USACE Homepage](#).

Most importantly, the annual [calendar](#) of training suspenses is posted on the CEHR Homepage. This calendar is frequently updated and distributed electronically throughout the Corps.

NOTE: Remember that HQDA and OPM suspenses are **NOT** for individuals, but for MACOMs. MACOM suspenses for individuals are listed on the USACE annual calendar of training suspenses. These dates are earlier, and sometimes much earlier than DA or OPM suspenses!

Local guidance

MSCs and some districts may publish guidance describing local training and development programs, training committees, and specific procedures for requesting and approving training. Servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers (CPACs) are a good source of information on local policies. Internet publishing varies from command to command.

Training Resources Information Page (TRIP)

The Training Resources Information Page [TRIP] is specifically designed to provide assistance to Corps of Engineers managers, supervisors, and employees on training matters. By using TRIP, you will have access to numerous training-related information resources, which will increase your knowledge about training and assist you in your role of training coordinator.

Accessing TRIP

You must be a registered user of the USACE Virtual Campus to access TRIP.

If you are already a registered user of the USACE Virtual Campus, you may continue directly to the [TRIP home page](#).

If you are NOT a registered user of the USACE Virtual Campus, you can register by following the steps below.

1. Access the [USACE Virtual Campus](#).
2. Select Distance Learning from the right side of the page.
3. Select Request User ID under the First-time Users topic on the lower left of the page.
4. Complete and submit the required registration form that appears on the screen. You will be notified by e-mail when your registration is in effect.
5. Once you are registered, you can access TRIP directly from the link above or through the USACE Virtual Campus at <http://pdsc.usace.army.mil/>. On the USACE Virtual Campus page, select Employee Performance Support System from the Quick Menu, type in your User Name and Password then select Training Resources Information Page.

Additional Training Resources

Links to additional training resources are provided below.

Federal Executive Institute

Human Resources Development

Management Development Centers

OPM and other policies

Training solutions

Career Management (for Career Program Employees)

Many Army civilians are covered by specific career programs (CP), which provide guidance and policies concerning recruitment, placement, career progression, promotion, and training. For example, CP-18 covers a variety of careers in the Engineers and Scientists (Resources and Construction) field. CPs are led by Army designated Functional Chiefs (FCs) and Functional Chief's Representatives (FCRs). Listings of FCs, FCRs, current career programs and program descriptions are contained in [AR 690-950](#).

Some CPs offer centralized referral for positions throughout the Army, using the [Army Civilian Career Evaluation System \(ACCES\)](#), which describes registration procedures.

Civilian Proponency

Career programs do not cover some civilians. This is a distinct disadvantage, since this puts them outside the main Army funding stream and may make it harder to share knowledge. To address this, Army has developed a system of civilian proponency, which operates somewhat like the career program system. Civilian proponents largely provide functional support for wage grade (WG) employees.

The objectives of the Personnel Proponent System are to:

- Establish responsibilities throughout the Army for all career field-related matters involved in the eight personnel life-cycle management functions. These functions are structure, acquisition, individual training and education, distribution, deployment, sustainment, professional development and separation.
- Ensure that a single agent is identified and made responsible for analysis of the functional role of all personnel in each career field.
- Ensure those personnel management policies, programs and procedures established by HQDA incorporate career field-related considerations.
- Foster achievement of the total Army goals and objectives of the Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS), Total Warrant Officer System (TWOS), the Enlisted Personnel Management System (EPMS) to include the special branches and the Civilian Personnel Management System (CPMS).

Additional information can be found in [AR 600-3, The Army Personnel Proponent System](#).

Prioritizing Training



Some of the most frequently asked questions we receive include “How much money should we spend on training?” and “How should we choose who attends training?” These questions are closely linked, and important for commanders and managers to consider when approving training and developmental assignments.

Currently, HQDA and the Corps do not set budgetary ceilings or targets for training. There is no goal in terms of percentage of salaries or in terms of the number of hours per Corps member. An activity's training expenses must be determined by local decisions that consider both training needs and available resources. Many activities use Training Committees to provide a corporate perspective when making these decisions. Training Committees composed of senior level managers from within the organization need to consider a number of factors when prioritizing training. These factors will vary annually, and from activity to activity, based on mission, money, people, time and other things. The first question to ask is really, “What training do we need to do to accomplish our mission?”

Here are some guidelines based on DOD and Army regulations you can use to answer this question, and prioritize your investment in training and developmental assignments:

Priority 1: Training that is typically a condition of employment and must be successfully completed within a specified time period, and meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Must be completed for employees to have for acceptable performance.
- Essential for mission accomplishment.
- Mandated by higher authority (law or Department of Defense) or is required for certification, health or safety reasons.
- Mandated by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) as an ACTEDS leader development core course.
- Essential, functional intern training.
- Must be completed during the current fiscal year to prevent an adverse impact on mission accomplishment.

Mandatory training includes technical training (e.g., certain Hazardous Materials handling courses) for some members, and non-technical training (e.g., Security, Sexual Harassment courses) for all members.

Priority 2: Training needed for effective performance and to improve the quality of mission accomplishment. This includes recommended career program training, rotational and developmental assignments.

Priority 3: This training is designed to improve or enhance knowledge, skills and abilities needed on the job. It would not be in the public interest to defer this level of training. Such training includes courses designed to increase technical, supervisory and managerial capabilities.

Training below these priorities should not be funded until all priority 1, 2, and 3 needs are met.

Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) Training ●

The Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) ensures the planned development of civilians through a blending of progressive and sequential work assignments, formal training and self-development activities, from entry level to key positions.

The Army's [Civilian Leadership Training](#) Core Curriculum identifies the mandatory and recommended leadership courses for all Army civilians in leadership positions, from intern to SES.

Career program specific (technical) training and development are explained in [individual career programs](#) through the ACTEDS Plans covered in CPOL.

The Army's goals for ACTEDS are:

- Provide a holistic approach to civilian leader development through a planned combination of leadership courses, professional and technical training, progressively more responsible job assignments and self-development.
- Develop broad, multi-disciplinary civilian executive talent in complex fields such as acquisition, logistics, installation and information management and research and development.
- Ensure consistent quality across occupations through planned career development of civilian employees from entry to senior executive levels.
- Ensure technical proficiency at each progression level and offer an opportunity for growth and development for those individuals with high potential for advancement.

ACTEDS plans are developed for career programs (refer to [AR 690-950, Career Management](#)) and career fields (refer to [AR 600-3, The Army Personnel Proponent System](#)) to identify required competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) at the five major stages of career advancement (intern, specialist, supervisor, manager, and executive).

As noted in the Career Management AR, career programs and Functional Chief Representatives (FCRs) sponsor and fund a number of competitive professional development opportunities which may include university training, developmental assignments, Training-With-Industry assignments, and selected short and long term career development courses.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following addresses a few frequently asked questions—and answers!—about developmental assignments and training.

1. Can we fund developmental assignments? Yes. Developmental assignments are often an excellent, and sometimes the only way to develop certain skills. For example, sending an employee to work with a private sector firm, or other government agency can be extremely useful for transferring procedures, techniques, skills or knowledge to the Corps. To get the best return from this investment, we strongly recommend that before you send anyone anywhere, you set up specific goals for the trainee to accomplish, and a plan for sharing his or her learning and experiences when he or she returns. (Refer to the previous section on Action Planning.) [ER 350-1-420](#) provides additional information on developmental assignments.
2. I'd like to set up a local developmental assignment. What are some things I need to consider? Since these assignments enhance careers and help qualify people for promotion, they must be open to competition. Be sure to advertise these assignments to all qualified. This is especially important if you intend to offer temporary promotions. See [ER 350-1-420](#) for additional information and a format for announcing developmental assignments.
3. I'd like to send someone on a developmental assignment, but don't have the money to fund this. Is central funding available? Yes. Army Career Program Managers may fund "Training with Industry" (TWI) and developmental assignments for careerists who apply under HQDA-sponsored Competitive Professional Development (CPD) Training. Go to [Civilian Personnel OnLine](#) (CPOL) for information about CPD training opportunities.
4. Can we fund "professional training?" Maybe. This type of training usually means training to obtain professional certificates, licenses or programs designed to prepare members for professional certification or licensing exams. AR [690-400](#), Chapter 410 is very clear: "Training is not to be used only to raise the employee's general educational level or help them prepare for an academic degree, professional certificate or occupational license." However, the regulation also states that training experiences which "develop the employee's job competence or support a planned career assignment" may be funded. If these training experiences also help an individual obtain professional certification, this incidental benefit is permitted.

Remember, training can be authorized only to meet specific needs. Management, not the employee, determines these needs. Management also may determine that a coaching, prep or refresher course, and even a professional exam, may be the best (cost effective) way to meet specific training needs.

5. Can we pay someone to obtain a college degree? Generally, no. The same rationale as described in question 2 applies here. Additionally, so does the same “loophole.” While we cannot generally pay for undergraduate or graduate degrees, we can fund needed training at colleges and universities. If such training enables an employee to obtain a degree, this incidental benefit is permitted. However, we cannot pay specific degree-related fees.
6. Are there times when we can pay for a degree? Yes. 5 CFR 410.511 and OPM policy states that “educational expenses related to the training of Federal employees pursuing an academic degree may be paid...when it is necessary to recruit or retain employees in occupations where actual or anticipated shortages exist.” Contact your CPAC for information on which occupations are defined as “critical.” For example, the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (part of PL 101-510) identified the acquisition occupation as having a shortage throughout DOD for a 10-year period from the date of that law. OPM has decided that some positions are also “pre-determined” to be in a shortage category, based on locality. Again, see your CPAC for a more detailed explanation and assistance.
7. Can all job related training be approved? No. Job relatedness is not the main condition necessary for approving training. There is no provision in Federal law to spend funds solely on this basis. There must always be a valid training need before training can be approved.
8. What are the rules about overtime pay during training? These rules are complex and difficult to understand for many of us. For a complete explanation, go to [CPOL](#) click on “PERMISS,” select “Training,” then “Training, Duty Hours and Special Pay.” Basically, however, there are different rules for Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempt and non-exempt employees.

For **FLSA non-exempt** employees:

- Overtime (also called premium) pay may be paid for time spent on training course homework (including pre-course work) when that employee is required to do that work after normal classroom/duty hours, and when the training meets Priority 1 and 2 definitions (see above). For additional information on overtime pay, see the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) (5 CFR 551.423 and 29 CFR 785.27 - 785.32).

NOTE: You can link to these Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) citations from the PERMISS web site, accessed through [CPOL](#).

- Supervisors and employees should estimate the amount of required overtime necessary before attending training. Supervisors may also require employees to certify the amount of time spent completing overtime work assignments.
- Overtime is also appropriate for non-exempt employees traveling to training after duty hours. Whenever possible, training should be scheduled to avoid this category of premium pay.

For additional information on overtime payment for travel related to training, see 5 USC 5542(b)(2) (supp.1995), 5 CFR 550.112(e), and Comp. Gen. B-165311 (Nov 12, 1968), accessed through [CPOL](#).

FLSA exempt employees are not covered under the law; i.e., they are not required to be paid overtime for training.

9. What do I need to know about the Continued Service Agreement (CSA)?
The CSA helps us protect the taxpayers' interest by obtaining a return for their investment in our people. CSAs are required for training of 80 hours or longer, and are most commonly used for long term training (LTT). The CSA requires that people agree to continue in Federal service for a period three times the length of their training assignment. This period begins when they complete their training. The CSA obligation may be transferred to other Federal agencies, but the other agency must agree to monitor this obligation, and this must be in writing. A copy of the CSA (and any transfer agreement) must be placed in the member's Official Personnel File (OPF).

You should also know that the AR states that when reimbursement for training is required, commanders “must give written notice, requesting payment, to the employee. The employee must receive the notice at least 5 workdays before [starting work at another Federal agency] or termination of Federal employment.” ([AR 690-400](#), 410, paragraph 5-8a(4)). Your supervisors must provide very timely notice in cases where repayment is required. Since a typical non-Government LTT assignment can easily cost \$35,000 or more (not including salary), we need your help in recovering money when members fail to fulfill their agreements.

10. Where can I read the “fine print” of the CSA? See the DD1556 (Request, Authorization, Agreement, Certification of Training and Reimbursement) which is in CEFMS.
11. Can we pay our people to audit training courses? No. It is Corps policy to prohibit payment (including salary, tuition and other expenses) for auditing training courses taken to fulfill priority training needs. Corps members may, of course, audit training courses on their own time and at their own expense. The rationale behind this policy is simple. When we pay our people to attend training, we expect them to maximize their learning experience. We expect them to participate fully, attend all class sessions, complete homework, projects and assignments, tests and evaluations. We expect our people to do their best and successfully complete their training. Auditing training does not require participants to perform the same as non-auditing students. If we paid our people to audit courses, we would send the wrong message and not guarantee that we (and the taxpayers) get the most for the training investment.
12. Can I send people to a conference as training? Sometimes. A conference can be a developmental assignment (a type of training) when
- Its purpose is educational or instructional
 - More than half the time scheduled is for a planned, organized exchange of information between presenters and the audience
 - The content focuses on improving individual or organizational performance
 - Developmental benefits will be derived by employee attendance

Additional information is in [EC 690-1-704](#), available on the web. Also see [ER 37-1-18](#), paragraph 6b-c. While this regulation addresses non-training meetings, the referenced portions speak to saving money by combining conferences with training events

13. Does this mean that if a conference does not meet these criteria, we cannot send people to them? No. You can send people to such conferences, however since they are not training, you cannot use the training authority or a DD1556 for payment.
14. How about meetings? Can meetings qualify as training? Yes. A meeting is training if, according to the AR, "there is an organized instructional program with stated learning objectives to be reached by the participants." If a meeting qualifies as training, you can use a DD1556. If it doesn't, you can't.
15. Can military personnel attend training activities intended mainly for civilians? Yes.
16. Where can I get information on USACE-sponsored Long-Term Training opportunities, requirements and procedures? This information is available in [ER 350-1-416](#).
17. Is there a list of suspenses for training programs? Yes. CEHR-D publishes a list of USACE training suspenses annually. This list is updated throughout the year. This list is also sent to commanders and Human Resources Officers via email.
- NOTE: USACE suspenses are always **earlier** than those advertised by Army or DOD! To see the suspense list, go to the [CEHR Homepage](#), and click on the "Training Calendar."
18. How should we evaluate courses and transfer that information to those who make training investment decisions? Whenever we pay for training, we require trainees and their supervisors to complete a DD1556. After completing training, both the employee and the supervisor are required to complete the evaluation portion of that form. Too often, if this is done at all, the information is not shared with those making training investment decisions. This information (on what courses were helpful and provided training useful to your command) should be shared with local training committees or anyone who makes decisions about which training to support. Further, we encourage you to pass along information on useful (and not-so-useful) training courses up through HR channels and to other commanders in your MSC or organization.
19. Where can I find the law, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) citations on training, and OPM training regulations online? These resources are listed on your [References](#) page under Federal statutory and regulatory information.

Commander's Guide References

[Annual training suspense calendar](#)

[Army Civilian Career Evaluation System \(ACCES\)](#)

[AR 600-3: The Army Proponent System](#)

[AR 690-950 Civilian Career Management](#)

[AR 690-400, Chapter 410](#)

[CEHR Homepage](#)

[Civilian Leadership Training Core Curriculum](#)

[Civilian Personnel OnLine \(CPOL\)](#)

[EC 690-1-704: Civilian Personnel - Conferences as Training Activities](#)

[ER 37-1-18: USACE Sponsored Meetings](#)

[ER 350-1-416: HQUSACE-Sponsored Long Term Training](#)

[ER 690-1-414: Proponent-Sponsored Engineer Corps Training \(PROSPECT\) Program](#)

[Federal statutory and regulatory information \(CFR\) and other sources of policy, guidance, and information](#)

[Federal Executive Institute](#)

[Human Resources Development](#)

[Management Development Centers](#)

[Professional Development Support Center \(PDSC\)](#)

[Training - 5 Year IDP and Development Assignments](#)

[Training Resources Information Page \(TRIP\)](#)

[Training solutions](#)

[U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) and additional policies](#)

[USACE Homepage](#)

